

Venue:
Community

Goal:
Increase Community
Capacity for
Tobacco Control

Activity:
C1.01 Youth Coalition/
Advisory Board



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- **Population (Census 2000): 700,820**
- **Total Households (Census 2000): 260,800**
- **Adult Cigarette Smoking Prevalence (BRFSS/ATS 2003): 26 percent**
- **Estimated Number of Adult Cigarette Smokers (DOH 2004): 132,100**
- **Number of Students (OSPI 2003): 130,070**
- **Eighth Grade Cigarette Smoking Prevalence (HYS 2002): 9 percent**

Tacoma-Pierce County Youth Leadership and Advocacy

Project Description

The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department developed a process for engaging county youth tobacco coalitions and other prevention groups in meaningful advocacy and policy change projects by creating a supportive structure that provides leadership training, grant money, and ongoing technical support.



Inputs

Rationale

- Mobilizing anti-tobacco youth can have a powerful effect on community systems change. Youth advocacy activities seek to change institutional policies and reinforce anti-tobacco norms. Their actions can be used to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke in bowling alleys and other establishments frequented by youth, to motivate current tobacco users to quit, to reduce or at least call attention to tobacco promotions and industry manipulation, and to work with retailers that sell tobacco products in an effort to reduce illegal sales to underage youth.
- The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department wanted to provide more challenging opportunities for local youth coalitions and to extend those opportunities to other youth that were participating in school- and community-based tobacco prevention teams.
- Because staff capacity was too limited to work directly with local youth coalitions, a process was developed for working with existing groups and allowing them to apply for training and grant dollars to perform an advocacy/policy change project in tobacco prevention.
- A study called "Teens as Advocates for Substance Use Prevention: Strategies for Implementation" ¹ identified possible methods for effectively involving youth in advocacy and policy change and provided information about a leadership training group, Youth Leadership Institute (www.YLI.org; Eric M. Rowles, associate director of training and technical assistance, (415) 836-9160).

¹ Elaine Tencati, et al published in the Society of Public Health Education's Health Promotion Practice Journal in January 2002

Target Audiences

- Primary: For trainings-youth, youth advisors (adults), and Youth Tobacco Prevention Work Group staff. For advocacy/policy change projects-youth, youth advisors (adults), decision makers (city council, school board, etc.), Pierce County residents.
- Secondary: For trainings and advocacy/policy change projects-parents and family of youth involved

Resources

Staff

- *First year:* Six health department staff members were part of the Youth Tobacco Prevention Work Group.
- *Current year:* Four staff members on the Youth Tobacco Prevention Work Group.

Funding

- Tobacco Prevention and Control Program funds were used for the program.
- *First year:* Each group was allowed to request up to \$2,000 for its project. Total granted for all the groups was about \$19,000 plus the cost of outside training.
- *Current Year:* Each group was allowed to request up to \$5,000 for its project. Total granted for all the groups was about \$25,000 (training was done internally and with community partners).

Partnerships

- *Partners involved in trainings:* Youth Leadership Institute, Center for Health Training/Tobacco Prevention Resource Center, Mindy May from the American Cancer Society, Tacoma School Board member, City of Sumner councilmember, a local parks board representative, and KGHP Radio
- *Partners involved in advocacy/policy change project groups:* Indochinese Cultural and Service Center, Korean Women's Association, Metropolitan Development Council, Eastside Boys and Girls Club, Diaz Art for Youth, Girl Scouts, Gig Harbor High School, Safe Streets Youth Leading Change (Lincoln, Foss, and Mount Tahoma high schools), Emerald Ridge High School, Bethel High School, Rogers High School, Pierce County Leaders in Tobacco Education, City of Sumner Youth Commission, Peninsula High School, and KGHP Radio

Activities

1. A work group of county staff members was developed to organize and oversee the process. A series of four trainings was set up with the Youth Leadership Institute.
2. Decision makers, adult leaders, and youth from organizations and schools were invited to a luncheon to promote the Youth Leadership Institute training series. At the luncheon, applications were given to select groups interested in incorporating youth tobacco prevention advocacy work with their existing groups. One adult mentor and two youth per group were invited to attend the training series.
3. Each group was provided with one county work group member to act as an advisor and technical assistant.
4. Two trainings were conducted that focused on developing youth leadership.
5. At the third training, groups created measurable timelines for their projects and filled out grant applications. Youth Leadership Institute trainers and county advisors reviewed the projects and provided suggestions on how to perform them.
6. At the final training, each group performed a practice presentation asking their respective decision maker to adopt a policy or advocate for change.
7. Required monthly meetings were established between group representatives and their county advisors to allow for project updates and technical assistance.

Outputs

1. Two hundred fifty invitations to the luncheon were mailed and follow-up phone calls were made; 92 people attended the luncheon.
2. *First year:* 13 groups (including school and community groups) were chosen to attend the trainings and received project grants. Thirty-six youth and 17 adults attended the series of four trainings.
3. *Current year:* Six groups (including school and community groups) were chosen to attend the trainings and received project grants. Twenty-four youth and 13 adults attended the one day training and monthly meetings.
4. Group projects included advocating to school boards for enforcement of the youth tobacco possession law on campus, establishing a no-smoking policy at local businesses, educating committee members in the Washington State Legislature on the importance of prohibiting tobacco sampling statewide, advocating to city council members to enforce codes and ordinances on the advertisement of tobacco and alcohol products, and asking the Western Washington Fair Board to stop allowing the sampling of chew during the rodeo weekend.
5. Final reports were submitted to the county on each group project.
6. A celebration was held to honor the efforts of each group and to present them with a recognition plaque. It was well attended by local, state, and county health officials, family members, and other supporters of their projects.
7. During the first year of implementation, the groups reached more than 11,000 community members including youth, parents, and officials through their projects.
8. This process is currently taking place with new and returning groups and also will be offered in fiscal year 2004-2005.

Evaluation

- Qualitative data were collected from the groups at the beginning and the end of their projects. Data showed that decision makers were impressed by the knowledge and enthusiasm that all of the youth groups demonstrated through their projects. Officials from schools, city council, community organizations, and the state Legislature all commented on how well prepared the youth were and that they were motivated by their passion. All the youth groups expressed feelings of accomplishment. They were excited to see that they were being listened to and were instrumental in making positive change in their communities.
- Pre- and post-project surveys developed from instruments provided by the Youth Leadership Institute and the American Legacy Foundation were used to measure leadership skills and interest in engaging in community change and policy work.
- In addition to collecting qualitative data, this is the first year that we have integrated pre- and post-tests. The pre-tests have been administered to all the groups and the post-tests will be administered upon completion of the projects that are currently being implemented. The results should be available in June.

Lessons Learned

- Multiple trainings were difficult for youth and adults to attend. Training has been scaled back to a one-day event. Experienced groups will aid new groups in future trainings.
- It was difficult for groups to identify projects that contained an advocacy/policy change component versus direct education only. The county work group had to be sensitive to group ideas and try to formulate advocacy components to fit them. Now the selection of projects is focused around specific topic areas versus open ended.
- The maximum grant amount has been increased to \$5,000, based on youth and county work group feedback.
- We would absolutely recommend this process to others. It requires a great deal of coordination and passion, but the youth and their adult advisors are capable of doing amazing things given enough support!